

# THE ART OF E. A. RICKARDS

COMPRISING

*A Collection of his Architectural  
Drawings, Paintings, and Sketches  
with a Personal Sketch by*

ARNOLD BENNETT

*an Appreciation by*

H. V. LANCHESTER

*and Technical Notes by*

AMOR FENN



TECHNICAL JOURNALS LTD LONDON

1920



DESIGN FOR THE CANADIAN WAR MEMORIAL.

# CONTENTS

	PAGE
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS .. .. .	viii
LIST OF SUBSCRIBERS .. .. .	xi
EDITORIAL NOTE .. .. .	xv
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .. .. .	xvii
E. A. RICKARDS. A PERSONAL SKETCH BY ARNOLD BENNETT .. ..	I
AN APPRECIATION BY H. V. LANCHESTER .. .. .	7
NOTES AND COMMENTS. BY AMOR FENN .. .. .	12
ARCHITECTURAL DRAWINGS:	
CANADIAN WAR MEMORIAL .. .. .	15
WAR MEMORIAL FOUNTAIN AND HALL, NOTTINGHAM .. .. .	16
USHER HALL, EDINBURGH .. .. .	16
MUSEUM, CARDIFF .. .. .	16
CENTRAL HALL, WESTMINSTER .. .. .	16
PRINCE OF WALES MUSEUM, BOMBAY .. .. .	34
PORT OF LONDON AUTHORITY DESIGN .. .. .	34
COUNCIL CHAMBERS: CARDIFF MUNICIPAL BUILDINGS AND DEPTFORD	
TOWN HALL .. .. .	34
PRELIMINARY STUDY FOR MESSRS. COLNAGHI AND OBACH'S	
PREMISES, NEW BOND STREET, W. .. .. .	46
PERSPECTIVE OF LONDON COUNTY HALL .. .. .	46
STUDY FOR INTERIOR DECORATION .. .. .	46
DESIGNS FOR PUBLIC MONUMENTS .. .. .	57
DESIGNS FOR PROGRAMMES, ETC. .. .. .	75
LITHOGRAPHS .. .. .	83
BOOK ILLUSTRATIONS .. .. .	89
CARICATURES .. .. .	107
WATERCOLOURS AND SKETCHES .. .. .	115

# LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	PAGE
DESIGN FOR THE CANADIAN WAR MEMORIAL (COLOUR) .. ..	<i>Frontispiece</i>
ARCHITECTURAL DRAWINGS	
CANADIAN WAR MEMORIAL DESIGN: PERSPECTIVE OF INTERIOR .. ..	17
WAR MEMORIAL FOUNTAIN AND HALL, NOTTINGHAM .. ..	19
SKETCH DESIGN FOR USHER HALL, EDINBURGH .. ..	21
SKETCH DESIGN FOR WELSH NATIONAL MUSEUM, CARDIFF .. ..	23
CENTRAL HALL, WESTMINSTER:	
GENERAL VIEW .. ..	25
THE GRAND STAIRCASE .. ..	27
SKETCH SUBMITTED IN PRELIMINARY COMPETITION .. ..	29
DETAIL DRAWING .. ..	31
DETAIL DRAWING .. ..	33
DETAIL OF PROPOSED MUSEUM, BOMBAY .. ..	35
DETAIL OF DESIGN FOR PORT OF LONDON AUTHORITY BUILDING .. ..	37
FIRST STUDY OF TOWER, PORT OF LONDON AUTHORITY BUILDING .. ..	39
ALTERNATIVE STUDY FOR PORT OF LONDON AUTHORITY BUILDING .. ..	39
DESIGN FOR MEMORIAL TABLET .. ..	39
CARDIFF TOWN HALL: INTERIOR OF COUNCIL CHAMBER .. ..	41
DEPTFORD TOWN HALL: INTERIOR OF COUNCIL CHAMBER .. ..	43
STUDY FOR A MONUMENT .. ..	45
STUDY FOR GLAMORGAN COUNTY HALL .. ..	45
PRELIMINARY STUDY FOR MESSRS. COLNAGHI AND OBACH'S BUILDING, NEW BOND STREET, LONDON .. ..	47
PERSPECTIVE OF LONDON COUNTY HALL DESIGN .. ..	49
PRELIMINARY STUDY FOR LONDON COUNTY HALL .. ..	51
STUDY FOR INTERIOR DECORATION .. ..	53
DESIGN FOR SIDEBOARD .. ..	55



## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS—*continued*

### DESIGNS FOR PUBLIC MONUMENTS

	PAGE
MONUMENT DE LA REFORMATION A GENÈVE .. .. .	59
SKETCH FOR A STREET TERMINAL .. .. .	61
ASTLEY MEMORIAL FOUNTAIN, NEWMARKET .. .. .	63
FIRST PREMIATED DESIGN FOR A PEDESTAL MEMORIAL (CIVIC ARTS ASSOCIATION) .. .. .	65
STUDY FOR MEMORIAL TO KING EDWARD VII, PARLIAMENT SQUARE ..	67
DESIGN FOR A PUBLIC MONUMENT .. .. .	69
SKETCH DESIGN FOR EQUESTRIAN STATUE .. .. .	71
PEN-STUDY FOR EQUESTRIAN STATUE .. .. .	73

### DESIGNS FOR PROGRAMMES, ETC.

PROGRAMME DESIGNS .. .. .	77
INVITATION CARD DESIGN .. .. .	79
PEN-DRAWING COMMEMORATING THE ARMISTICE, 11 NOVEMBER 1918 ..	81

### LITHOGRAPHS

LITHOGRAPHS .. .. .	85, 87
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### BOOK ILLUSTRATIONS

GENTLY SARDONIC ("From the Log of the 'Velsa' ") .. .. .	89
AN OFFICER OF THE FRENCH REPUBLIC ("From the Log of the 'Velsa' ")	89
SKETCHES FROM THE BOOK OF THE A.A. PLAY 1909 .. .. .	91, 93
GAMBLING AT MONTE CARLO (From "Paris Nights") .. .. .	95
OPPOSITE THE MOULIN ROUGE (From "Paris Nights") .. .. .	95
A BY-PRODUCT OF RUSSIAN POLITICS (From "Paris Nights") .. ..	97
THE UNFORGETTABLE SEASON (From "Paris Nights") .. .. .	97
LESS UNHAPPY HERE THAN AT HOME (From "Paris Nights") .. .. .	99
THE RESTAURANT (From "Paris Nights") .. .. .	99
THE "VELSA" AT HOORN ("From the Log of the 'Velsa' ") .. .. .	101

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS—*continued*

### BOOK ILLUSTRATIONS—*continued*

	PAGE
THE CAFÉ AMERICAN AT AMSTERDAM ("From the Log of the 'Velsa'")	101
SCENES IN GHENT ("From the Log of the 'Velsa'") .. .. .	103
A MINOR BARGE WHICH A GIRL CAN STEER ("From the Log of the 'Velsa'")	103
THE EMBARKATION ("From the Log of the 'Velsa'") .. .. .	105
ON THE DUNES NEAR BOULOGNE ("From the Log of the 'Velsa'") ..	105

### CARICATURES

VARIOUS CARICATURES .. .. .	107-111
TWO CARICATURES OF ARNOLD BENNETT .. .. .	113

### SKETCHES AND WATERCOLOURS

AN ARISTOCRAT AMONG THE LABOURING CLASSES (Colour) ("From the Log of the 'Velsa'") .. .. .	117
IN THE ESTUARY (Colour) ("From the Log of the 'Velsa'") .. ..	119
HARBOUR SCENE (Colour) .. .. .	121
LANDSCAPE (Monochrome) .. .. .	123
LANDSCAPE (Monochrome) .. .. .	125
LANDSCAPE (Colour) .. .. .	127
LANDSCAPE (Colour) .. .. .	129
LANDSCAPE (Colour) .. .. .	131
LANDSCAPE (Monochrome) .. .. .	133
STREET IN VIENNA .. .. .	135
FOUNTAINS, VENICE .. .. .	137
ELIZABETH GARDEN, VIENNA .. .. .	139

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## Editorial Note

**T**HIS volume summarizes the art of the late E. A. Rickards. It was in preparation while he was still living, although he was so broken in health as the sequel of his war service that complete recovery was known to be impossible. There seemed good ground for hope, however, that he would live to hold this book in his hands, and to rejoice over it as a substantial tribute to his genius. He was denied that consummation; but, ill as he was, he was greatly cheered by the knowledge that competent judges had considered his work worth collecting for publication, and he was comforted by the assurance that his family would benefit by the success of the book: in furtherance of which object three great friends of his who are eminent in art and letters have contributed gratuitously the valuable letterpress which accompanies the illustrations. Their articles, written from three distinctive points of view, but in each case from intimate knowledge of the man and his art, give no more than a just estimate of his consummate gifts, nor do they over-stress in the least degree the impression of his singularly vivid personality; for the charm of the man was no less than the fascination of his art. They leave no doubt as to his rare distinction as an artist, and their verdict is fully sustained by the clear and positive proofs of genius that this collection affords. It is here demonstrated that he succeeded to admiration in every form of art that he attempted—in his architectural design, which was always noble and bold in conception, daring and graceful in the decorative details; in his sketching, which is certainly matchless in our day for the extraordinary degree in which it unites to vigour and freedom the rather incompatible qualities of grace and delicacy; in his painting, which was rich in promise; and in his turn for caricature that, for insight and incisiveness, is perhaps unequalled since Phil May died.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.

*Grateful acknowledgments are made to Mr. Arnold Bennett, Mr. H. V. Lanchester, F.R.I.B.A., and Mr. Amor Fenn, for their articles, which have been generously contributed gratuitously; also to the following gentlemen who have kindly lent drawings for reproduction in the present volume:—Mr. Arnold Bennett, Lieut.-Col. A. W. Brewill, F.R.I.B.A., Mr. Philip Connard, A.R.A., Mr. F. W. Lanchester, Mr. Frederick Marriott, A.R.E., A.R.C.A., Mr. Henry Poole, A.R.A., Mr. Herbert Wigglesworth, F.R.I.B.A., and Mr. Derwent Wood, R.A.*

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# Edwin Alfred Rickards

## A PERSONAL SKETCH

The first clear recollection I have of E. A. Rickards dates back, I suppose, nearly thirty years. We were riding down Brompton Road together on the top of a (two-horse) bus, and we had just passed Harrods Stores (not the present hot-coloured building) when I pointed along a side street to the left and ventured the opinion that one or two of the new houses down there were rather agreeable—architecturally. He at once became excited—not about the houses, though I believe that he respected them, but about the mere fact that a layman should show any artistic interest in modern architecture. He said that he had never met such a phenomenon before. (True, we were both very young.) Now, I knew nothing whatever of architecture, and my interest in those particular houses was due solely to the accident of my being intimate with a friend of the architect's. Moreover, I made a bad mistake in coupling with two good houses a third one which (it appeared) could not possibly be regarded seriously. Nevertheless Rickards' amazement—half genuine and half histrionic—at the aforesaid phenomenon was not going to be chastened by minor details. Of my own accord I had actually displayed an interest in modern architecture!

This opening provided him with the opportunity to develop what was one of his favourite themes for many years, namely, the theme that architecture is now the Cinderella of professions. His interest and pride in his profession were always passionate. Its inferior position in the social fabric—which, one might gather from his animadversions, was somewhat below street-sweeping or grocerying—continually occupied his mind. And he would lay the blame equally on the indifference of Society and on the negligences of the profession itself. Indeed, he was at least as hard on architects as on their philistine patrons. He was never at a loss to find illustrations for his favourite theme. He would, for example, sardonically inquire how it was that the Architectural Room at the Royal Academy was chiefly used by people who desired to converse privately, and why the newspapers gave so much space to bad portraits and anecdotes in oil, and none at all to those vast creations of architecture which involve far more sustained intellectual and imaginative effort than any picture or statue that was ever painted or chiselled.

He was convinced—I think rightly—that architecture is the greatest of the arts, and he was never able to get over the unquestioned fact that it is not publicly treated as such. The double current of his mind—discoverable in nearly all great artists—towards the ideal and the practical, was always evident in his constant advocacy of improved organization within the profession. In the nineties he did not suggest that architects might at any rate manage to organize themselves as well as dentists—he left that for me to say, and I said it.

He would point, in proof of lack of organization, to his own case, which, except in some early details, was not at all an uncommon one. Owing to the lack

## THE ART OF E. A. RICKARDS

of professional organization he followed no regular course of architectural training, and probably he could not have followed any regular course. Born in Chelsea, in 1872, he entered the Royal Academy Schools at the age of fifteen, without any previous equipment. He derived almost no benefit from the schools, which seemingly were designed for the further advancement of already advanced students, who could compete for prizes. He then spent a few years in the classes of the Architectural Association. But his Alma Mater was really the galleries of South Kensington Museum, where he studied a very great deal—alone. He travelled about Western Europe as often as he could, which was fairly often, and learned from masterpieces *in situ*. Little by little his creative individuality became known among architects. He worked for and under architects on jobs in which he had chiefly an artistic interest. As a member of his firm he went in for competitions and failed. Similarly, he went in for competitions and won. And then after seven years of practice he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects. His firm was "placed" in the competitions for the Colston Hall, Bristol, for the Port of London Building, and for various other public buildings. It came first in the competitions for the Cardiff City Hall and Law Courts (1897), the Deptford Town Hall (1902), the Hull Art School (1902), the Central Hall Westminster (1905), and the Christian Science Church, Curzon Street, Mayfair (1908); and all these buildings have been duly erected. But as for certificates, degrees, distinctions, Rickards never gained any, and he never attempted to gain any. He grew into an architect without the slightest formality or ceremonial induction. His election to the Institute was not at all an induction; it was a recognition of a fact already accomplished. And in respect of training, his case, as I say, was a not uncommon one. Things are altered now. The organization of the profession has been seriously taken in hand, with results. As an ignorant layman, capable sometimes of discretion, I will say no more on the point.

Nor shall I be temerarious enough to discuss Rickards' architecture, since my natural inaptitudes are such that in over a quarter of a century of close association he succeeded in imparting to me almost no technical knowledge of the greatest art. Only I shall venture to disagree with the opinion, which I have sometimes heard expressed, that his taste in architecture was narrow. It certainly was not. His work, like the work of all first-rates, shows marked characteristics formed under obvious influences. You can recognize a Rickards design just as you can recognize a Balzac novel or a Cameron etching. The work is the man, and one man cannot be two men.

But I have never met an artist in any art of more catholic taste. I have never met an artist in any art who was more willing—it would be fairer to say more eagerly anxious—to recognize merit in the productions of different styles and different ages. In the contemplation of a work of art—and especially of a work of architecture—all preconceptions and human prejudice would seem to leave him. I have stood with him in front of masterpieces in Italy, France, Holland, and other

countries; but I have not noticed that he would extol the favourite Baroque at the expense of anything else.

In Paris, for example, he would keep an open and thoroughly sympathetic mind before the east façade of the Louvre, the Gambetta monument in the Place du Carrousel, the Garnier Opera House, the Elysée Palace Hotel, or the Cathedral of Notre Dame. Few artists of my acquaintance are capable of such even detachment. Rickards estimated everything for himself. He was not disrespectful of tradition, but on the other hand he was not to be intimidated by tradition. Nay, I have been with him to inspect the Lanchester and Rickards Town Hall at Cardiff, and there, too, I have observed in his attitude precisely the same balanced catholicity—combined, I need not say, with an impeccable modesty. And if I could have gone with him to Karnak I should confidently have expected from him the same kind of appreciation there.

I think I know more about Rickards' watercolour work than about his architecture. I have never attempted to design a building, but I have defaced hundreds of sheets of good white paper in efforts to transfer thereto the emotions aroused in me by the beauties of nature. Rickards must have done architectural watercolours throughout his career. His perspectives of architecture, whether plain or coloured, are famous in the profession, and have probably not been surpassed in accomplishment by an Englishman in modern times; and among my possessions is an early watercolour design for a Tomb of the Commander—with a gigantic equestrian statue and a very small Don Juan. But he entered on the devious path of a watercolourist from nature only about ten years ago. As a sketcher from nature he was extremely excitable, and while at work he would produce in his companions and himself the illusion that nothing on earth matters but watercolour. His hesitations in choosing a subject, his lamentations over the imperfections of the vehicle and the unapproachableness of nature, his throes of creation, his alternations of hope and despair, and his thrilling discovery the next morning that the work accomplished after all had points—these phenomena stand out in the drama of my artistic existence. His interest in ways and means never waned. I doubt if he ever decided whether cakes or tubes yield the best results. As for the selection of a palette, his classical bent towards austerity was always at war with his instinct for adventure. Mr. Henry Poole, A.R.A., once invented a palette which much influenced him (and me too); but in the end the aforesaid classical bent triumphed over the excessive romanticism of that palette.

Another sculptor, Mr. Derwent Wood, R.A.—it is astonishing how revolutionary sculptors become when they take to watercolour—introduced the celebrated mosaic method of putting on washes. By this method you treated the drawing as though it were a stained-glass window, leaving whites for the leads, and filling up the whites anyhow afterwards. I remember Rickards arriving upon me to preach the gospel of this method with all the fervour of a John the Baptist. (It is true that some advanced French aquarellistes have employed it with a negligent freedom

## THE ART OF E. A. RICKARDS

that Mr. Derwent Wood would certainly contemn.) We practised mosaic enthusiastically. But at last Rickards made me give it up because it was not in the classical English tradition—and from some recent beautiful watercolours of Mr. Derwent Wood's I surmise that the patentee has given it up also. Nevertheless, it possessed distinct advantages, if only because it favoured speed.

These preoccupations with the mechanics of the art may seem to indicate the mere amateur. I have not yet, however, met a first-rate artist who was not ready to discuss the mechanics of his art all day and all night. And the fact is that such preoccupations are only superficial. Rickards' real preoccupation was continuously with the design of line, mass, and colour. His vision emerged clear and almost changeless through every variation of technique. He might have the air of wandering away from classical principles, but in truth he never did so. And after an apparent infidelity he would invariably return, humble, to the classic. I think that for him Cotman embodied the classic more completely than any other master. He would take me to the Print Room of the British Museum; he would demand from the attendants hidden portfolios of magnificent Cotmans—doubtless considered by the authorities too good for a public accustomed to ten thousand second-class Turners; and we would perceive how watercolours, with what tints and by what methods, truly ought to be done. In the early years of the war Rickards discovered lithography, a process which suited his style and temperament as well as any; and he did a series of quasi-symbolic lithographs touching the war. Some of these disclose an astonishing natural gift for the stone, and they must count among his more distinguished productions. He would have reverted to lithography one day.

Although he would talk far less about caricature than about sketching from nature, he was vastly more deeply bitten by caricature than by any other art except architecture. He would not discuss caricature; he just caricatured. Caricature was second nature to him. He caricatured all the time. He must have done thousands of caricatures; assuredly he did hundreds of caricatures of myself. It was characteristic of his intense thoroughness, in any job in which his full powers of draughtsmanship were excited, that he would never tire of a subject that had once caught him. He would continue for years eliminating inessentials and emphasizing essentials, improving the design and heightening the beauty of the line. His caricatures are ruthless criticisms of the personality caricatured; but they are also full of fun, caprice, and grace. Nearly all are beautiful; but some are terrible. Only in caricaturing himself did he always exhibit a mild benevolence. If accident had soon enough pushed him towards illustrated journalism and the caricaturing of celebrities, he might never have been heard of as an architect, which would have been a great calamity; it is probable that he would have become one of the most famous caricaturists, if not the supreme caricaturist, of the age.

I have discussed briefly and without authority some aspects of Rickards' artistic production; and certainly Rickards was an artist before everything. I have not met anyone with the artistic temperament—using the phrase not at all in a derogatory

sense—more completely developed. Also the artist, in his case as in all others, was inseparable from the man. But one makes friends with a man, never with an artist. One could not dine at a restaurant with the composer of the Emperor Concerto; one could only dine with a fellow named Beethoven—a strange fellow—you would not think he was the composer of the Emperor Concerto—a fellow the sum of whose personal characteristics pleased and interested you and drew out your sympathy. There is something not unimportant to be said about Rickards the individual.

I do not exaggerate when I assert that none of his friends would call him a tremendous optimist, nor when I assert that he did not live about half a century without discovering grievances against the universe. As I write this I have an ancient vision of Rickards, in the old days when bicycles first had free-wheels, practising the free-wheeled bicycle for the first time in front of my house in France. Unquestionably Rickards got off the bicycle with a distinct grievance against the inventor of that disconcerting contrivance the free-wheel. Unquestionably he had an idea, confused but powerful, that the inventor of the free-wheel had invented the free-wheel for the special purpose of disconcerting just him, Rickards. The episode, trifling enough, furnished a good instance of the exercise of the acute critical faculty which Rickards could always bring into play upon the men and things constituting his environment.

Nevertheless Rickards always had a zest for life and for all manifestations of life, such as I have seldom seen equalled and never seen surpassed. He was a really great amateur of human existence in all its forms and moods. And his acute critical faculty did not in the very least prevent his rich enjoyment of whatever is vital. He was almost always interested; that is to say, his interests were not limited either by narrowness of mind, ignorance, or any customary conventions. And moreover he always saw all phenomena freshly, with a new eye, as though nobody had ever seen them before, and further, with a predisposition of benevolence towards them. Superficially often prejudiced, he was in fact the least prejudiced of observers, and his capacity for appreciation never knew fatigue. These qualities made him a marvellous travelling companion. He had had much experience as a traveller, and as a rule men who are used to travel gradually lose the divine capacity for wonder. With Rickards that capacity did not cease to grow. He must have seen the Louvre dozens of times before we saw it together; yet I shall not easily forget his unspoilt enthusiasm on that occasion. Nor shall I easily forget his passionate sudden exclamation in the Boboli Gardens at Florence, which he had known for years: "This is an enchanted land." It was an enchanted land, particularly for him. And if the inventor of the free-wheel had a malicious eye on Rickards, it is equally certain that the maker of the Boboli Gardens made them with a special view to Rickards' idiosyncrasy.

The appreciation was just as active in England. Riding a horse, any old horse, over a Bedfordshire common, with nothing in view but the sky and the

## THE ART OF E. A. RICKARDS

common and the horse's ears, Rickards could savour life with as much keenness, validity, and fairness, as amid the marvels of any continental city. The arts were much to him, very much indeed; but they were not everything; they were a long way from being everything. He was a human man before he was an artist and after he was an artist. (His war record alone shows that.) One perceives in the end that his appreciations taken together were guided by a fine sense of proportion; in other words, that he had the rarest of all gifts—common sense in imagination. This gift informs all his work. And it rendered him a miraculously stimulating companion for a person in my own profession. Impossible, in his society, not to be continually seeing life at a new angle. I would compare the peculiar quality of his observation and zest with Stendhal's. And I can never read Stendhal's travels, which are utterly unlike any other travels, without fancying that Rickards, had he been a writer and traveller a century ago, would have written precisely those books. Rickards, however, was ready to do everything except write. He was a lesson to those numerous writers who are secretly convinced that if you don't write you can't be really interesting. The two most interesting, provocative, and stimulating men I have yet encountered are H. G. Wells and E. A. Rickards.

ARNOLD BENNETT.

### POSTSCRIPT.

The above was written, and in type, before Rickards' unexpected death. With the exception of a few alterations in tense, I have left it exactly as it was first written. Rickards died of tubercular meningitis on the 29th August 1920, at the Home Sanatorium, Bournemouth, where, watched devotedly by his wife, he had been for more than a year. In 1919 he had been very ill. His health, however, had afterwards improved; he had begun to do a little work, and he was looking forward to a renewed activity when the fatal attack came. It would not be right to assert positively that he was a victim of the war; but I am inclined to think that he was. The War Office made an appeal for a few architects to do "special work" in France. Rickards, with several others, responded to the appeal. Having submitted himself to the military machine and gone to France, he was set to do work that the merest clerk could have done just as well as he. The continual exposure in long motor-car rides had its inevitable effect on his delicate constitution, and after some time he was invalided home. In England he was for a period still kept to purely clerical work; but, happily, he later obtained permission to do an important design for the proposed Canadian War Memorial Museum, which was exhibited at the Royal Academy. Then, in the spring of 1919, he broke down. No one can say whether or not he might have been living to-day if the War Office had not had the idea of sending a distinguished artist over military age to act as a travelling clerk behind the lines in France.

A. B.

## An Appreciation

The question of the ideal intellectual equipment for the Architect has often been posed, and many have formulated their views as to the range of knowledge desirable, thoughtlessly piling together qualifications so varied as to be outside the range of any except perhaps that *Leonardo* who arises once in many centuries.

We are all well enough aware of what the Architect might profitably know, and that the field of his activities stretches from the kindred arts of Sculpture and Painting, on the one hand, to the sciences employed by the constructive engineer on the other, not to speak of numerous ramifications hardly lying directly between these extremes.

Though architecture must needs have a basis of use and structure, it can only be expressive by modelling up on this basic material a mass with proportions, light and shade, and other qualities closely allied to those dominating the sculptor's art.

It was this attitude towards his art that gave E. A. Rickards' work the special quality of plasticity and that made him feel in the building up of a design much as a sculptor would in modelling a group. Notwithstanding the facility which strenuous study had given him in the handling of the architectural forms of his choice, Rickards' attitude towards them always created the impression that he would have rejoiced in rather more freedom in regard to mass and line than these permitted, and that he stood so near the position of the sculptor that but a slight difference of environment and training might have drawn him to the other side of the narrow line dividing the two arts. Despite this, it would be a mistake to imagine that the essential qualities of the art of architecture were in any degree ignored or slurred over. No one could have a clearer or more rational appreciation of the limitations and purpose of architectural design, and if at times an occasional appeal against a door or window as detrimental to the mode of expression desired, might convey the idea that this was regarded as dominating purpose, such a notion would be quickly dispelled when the solving of the difficulty came to be discussed. Then nothing would be accepted that failed to provide a solution possessing the quality, so indispensable in sound design, of a simple and clear treatment, free from over-ingenuous dodges, aiming at a result that should be felt to be the inevitable one.

Only the ability to achieve such a result will empower the architect to pass beyond the bounds of rational building and endow such building with those appropriate dispositions and forms that entitle it to rank as architecture. While there may be many roads to such achievement, it is not too much to claim that along the

## THE ART OF E. A. RICKARDS

line his development carried him, Rickards had reached a point which gives his work a lasting position as representative of the period in which it was executed. Many schools of thought have influenced the design of the last few decades, and recent works show the influence of these; but in few cases, nowadays, is it given to one individual working on distinctive lines to exercise a clear and unmistakable influence on the general practice of his art. Among British sculptors Alfred Gilbert has gained this distinction, and among British architects it would not be easy to find one with a more indubitable claim than E. A. Rickards. The less expert have frequently imagined they saw his hand in work with which he was in no way connected. Attributions such as these, as may well be imagined, did not afford any personal gratification. "Can my work be as bad as that?" would be the first thought to be voiced, and no reference to the well-worn proverb as to imitation could quite heal the wound.

To those who have watched the stages by which the artist reaches the full maturity of his powers, nothing is of greater interest than the extraordinary variety in the course such development takes. Some, by numerous experiments, secure each time a little further insight into the factors which best serve them in expressing their own message. Others begin frankly as the pupil and imitator of a master from whose methods they draw their first inspiration, gradually diverging from these as their own personality finds utterance. The subject of this note cannot be classed in either category. Though an active student, measuring and sketching the subjects that interested him, he was not over-eager to design, and his early studies were in no way, as is more usual, a *réchauffé* of subjects recently drawn, but rather an effort to realize a definite technique in architectural expression, not fully achieved, but each time getting nearer to accomplishment. He was always a relentless critic of his own designs, sometimes rather to the embarrassment of those for whom he worked early in his career. I recollect the blank look on the face of a well-known architect when he saw on Rickards' board a clean sheet in lieu of the design on which some ten days had been spent, and received the reply to his inquiry that "It was going all wrong, so I tore it up and am making a fresh start." Again and again I have heard him say, "This ought to do, at any rate I must not waste more time on it." Always, however, within a few hours the re-designing was under way. Details such as these, though they may interest those practising an art, must not be enlarged on to the exclusion of the more important question of the character of the resulting design. Yet, after all, what is there to be said that is really illuminating? The designs and drawings are here, and the appeal they make to one will differ from the appeal they make to another; their author would have been quite satisfied to leave it so, for few were more convinced than he that criticism is but an exposition of the mind of the critic. Still, it seems that an attempt should be made to indicate the salient characteristics of Rickards' work. The basic forms are generally simple and severe, but these are rendered interesting by a masterly handling of the light and shade in moulding and sculpture; larger and more complex designs afford greater opportunities



## THE ART OF E. A. RICKARDS

in this respect, so it will be noticed that the smaller the scale and mass the more the restraint exercised in the treatment. Continuous enrichment is employed but little, preference being given to the concentration of carving at points where it will assist the composition by contrast with plane surfaces. The illustrations, however, afford a far better means of realizing the very marked characteristics of the designs than any written descriptions could offer.

H. V. LANCHESTER.

*The following notes, also by Mr. Lanchester, are quoted from the "Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects":—*

The record of E. A. Rickards' professional career is even more inadequate than in most cases as an indication of his exceptional personality. It is indeed rather a commentary on the fact that it was only by a suppression of his most highly developed gifts that he could find a place in the existing regime where his genius could evolve a measure of expression. Like Alfred Stevens, for whose designs he had a profound admiration, the trammels of our present system of carrying out work were always felt to be a handicap, architecture being so rarely regarded as a desirable thing for its own sake, or apart from its aspect as gracing a structure owning utilitarian requirements as its primary purpose.

Rickards might have taken his place easily enough in the early days of the Renaissance, and it is hardly an overstatement to contend that in that congenial atmosphere his name would have come down to us as not the least among the splendid group of artists which gave renown to the Florence of the sixteenth century. He had the versatility and receptiveness that characterized them, a receptiveness quick to seize an idea, but only instantly to start on bringing it into harmony with his own method of expression. In the matter of versatility his keen appreciation of form and colour was well known to all his circle; and though, owing to the strenuous conditions of architectural practice in these days, especially for those not too favourably placed at the start, Rickards was not able to exercise these gifts to the fullest extent, he nevertheless did enough to prove that he might have taken a no less notable position as a sculptor, or have developed into a painter of marked individuality. In his slighter sketches his sense of the beauty of line was almost uncanny, a few rapid strokes giving a poise with vigour or grace, and if the mark was not hit at the first shot, there was no tinkering or correction, but a repetition of the same rapid movement with acute mental concentration on the variations required. Rickards' devotion to the art of his choice did not permit him to go very far in acquiring the technique of those allied to it, but it was none the less obvious that he possessed all the temperament and appreciation necessary to high achievement in any of these.

It is probable that circumstances influenced his first choice in the direction of architecture, and it was clearly only later that experience showed him that architecture

carried a certain measure of bondage not always to his taste—or rather that architecture is so seldom in demand without limitations that do not make it any less an art, but make it somewhat less the type of art that he would have chosen as a medium for expression. Though he enjoyed all his work intensely, if left to play with his ideas they generally took the form of ideal compositions of masses and sculpture conceived purely from the standpoint of emotional expression, and not, as with most of us, starting from the basis of a building with a specific purpose. This conception of design did not prevent his bringing valuable ideas to bear on the problems that ordinarily present themselves; indeed, a certain detachment from the usual attitude towards these made his handling of them more virile and productive. His appreciation of the dignity of architecture forbade his accepting any dodge or makeshift in overcoming a practical difficulty; the whole treatment had to be restudied until such difficulties disappeared and a solution was found that was the natural outcome of the requirement. It would be claiming too much to say that there was never a miscalculation in the methods taken to secure the desired effect; but, considering the individual character of his work, such mistakes were remarkably few, and were in more than one instance due to the difficulty in securing a full comprehension of his intention by the artists whose collaboration the design demanded.

Rickards throughout his life studied his art with absorbing interest; but such studies were not carried on by any obvious system, and the fact could only be recognized by his fertility in illustrating his suggestions by reference to buildings of various styles and ages. He possessed the faculty of noting only the factors that had a bearing on his own methods of design, and hence his knowledge sat lightly on him and his work preserved the intuitive character usual in the work of a genuine artist. Put in this form the impression conveyed yet lacks the force demanded in depicting his vivid personality; it would perhaps be nearer the mark to take the view that, after the first few years of his career, Rickards never deliberately or consciously studied, but that his exceptional sympathy with all branches of art, and the quick reaction that beauty in every form produced in him, provided all the interest necessary to sustain the vivid and vital character of his own work.

Critical as he was of his own efforts, Rickards applied the same standard to those of his contemporaries, and while quick to appreciate buildings showing beauty of treatment or imaginative fire, he was not given to spare his strictures on the work in which he discerned neither. That his sympathies were in no way narrow or governed by his own technique will be realized when it is mentioned that he always spoke with delight of the work of J. F. Bentley and W. Flockhart. The work of the former so interested him that he remarked on several occasions, "One of these days I too will try a design in the Byzantine manner." It may be doubtful whether he would ever have done so, but now, alas! the question is determined, and such a design will never see the light.

In the arts of painting and sculpture one felt that his opinions were quite exceptionally illuminating; he seemed to be able to overleap the obstacles due to

## THE ART OF E. A. RICKARDS

technical inexperience in these, and enter into the ideas prompting the work that interested him. How interested he could be in all artistic movements his friends must needs recognize, for he was always eager to impart his ideas and provoke an active discussion on them, not only as regards the activities allied to architecture, but extending to music, the stage, and to all things depending on emotional expression. This exceptional range of interest was the outcome of an unusually developed mental activity, and this was the salient characteristic giving Rickards such an individual place in his circle of friends, supplemented possibly by a careless frankness as to his own sensations and experiences, when his sense of humour would impel him to relate any amusing happening regardless of whether his own part in it was to his advantage or otherwise. This aspect has been glanced at in his friend Arnold Bennett's stories, "Simon Fuge" and "The Regent." It may be called a foible, and of trivial import, but one cannot think of him without remembering it; and after all, when there is such a prevalent practice of utilizing speech to disguise thought, it is refreshing to meet one whose whole attitude was diametrically opposed to such concealments.

Such frankness naturally provoked a return, and Rickards would often be found in the midst of an animated discussion on some question of life or art. Too keenly absorbed in his surroundings to devote a large proportion of his time to reading, he nevertheless contrived to extract from his books all that had a bearing on the subjects that interested him, and to acquire a good general knowledge of most of the arts, more particularly those in which he desired to experiment. His desires in this direction outran the possibilities; but he did achieve a very individual and attractive technique in watercolours, and his sense of form and line enabled him to make singularly clever caricatures. His first attempt at etching showed that he might have been very successful in this craft, but other claims precluded a further pursuit of it.

It is impossible not to deplore the loss of one for whom many years of activity might have been anticipated; the deprivation is the greater in that his genius had not reached its culminating point, but was up to the last still progressing and gaining strength. Not only in regard to his own efforts, but in the stimulus he gave to others do we feel the poorer through his having left us.

H. V. L.

## Notes and Comments

My earliest impression of E. A. Rickards is of an extremely shy youth, a student in the Architectural School of the Royal Academy, who apparently devoted more time to hypothetical perspectives than to the subjects set by the visiting teachers. His drawings were invariably embroidered with fanciful sketches of type and character, a habit that was persistent. Comparatively few of his detail drawings but are similarly decorated on the margins in response to some sudden reminiscence or to illustrate a point in conversation.

Those were the days when we had a profound belief in each other, and especially in ourselves; when our views on art and its various exponents were fearlessly expressed. Many of us in this sublime egoism were in no great hurry to do things—there was always the future.

Naturally diffident, Rickards did not share in this characteristic optimism, and notwithstanding the apparently implied disregard of academic conventions, his early years were industriously and profitably employed as to necessary training and experience. He was at no time of robust physique; but, despite the handicap of periods of indifferent health, his enthusiasm for study never flagged, and he acquired a knowledge and appreciation of intimate detail which are reflected in his later architectural work.

To deal with this at length would be an act of supererogation, in that it is already well known. Furthermore, where work is the result of collaboration in an ideal partnership, it is neither possible nor fair to attempt to differentiate.

That this work is distinctive will be readily conceded. It is a carrying on of Baroque tradition, as opposed to stylistic reproduction marked by great personality. This successful culmination may be truthfully attributed to a great extent to Rickards, as, with his meticulous regard for design and appropriate treatment, it is obvious that he was not disposed to entrust the responsibility of detailing to the hands of others, however capable.

The drawings convey an impression of facility, but the designing was really achieved after much consideration and experiment. His chief difficulty proceeded from a plethora of ideas. Invariably the final manifestation, however spontaneous in effect, was the result of many different renderings and rejections. A relentless critic of his own work, he would ruthlessly scrap anything that failed to satisfy his sense of fitness, regardless of time or labour.

His working drawings are not only concise details, but have an artistic charm of their own due to brilliant draughtsmanship, a quality which is accountable for the successful final rendering in material.

Though he was remarkable as a designer, the outstanding feature of Rickards' work is the extraordinary power of his draughtsmanship; his favourite medium of expression, and possibly the most successful, being that of line.

His drawings, which are always eloquent of a perfect knowledge of structure, are concrete renderings of impression—the result of sensitiveness to form and of mental visuality in an exceptional degree.

Temperamentally disposed to experiment, he exploited other mediums of expression. Whatever the manifestation, his draughtsmanship always shows fluency of line, and is unfailingly suggestive and thoroughly expressive. Irrelevant detail is always conspicuous by absence, the drawings being excellent examples of the art of elimination, alike in studies architectural or of character.

An early habit was his tendency to caricature, of which many of his sketch-books contain interesting examples.

Contrary to the academic definition, his work in this direction consists in emphasis of character and type rather than in the exaggerated distortion that tends to the ridiculous.

Few of his immediate friends and acquaintances fail to appear in phases both humorous and characteristic, and that there is nothing malicious in his renderings is shown by the fact that the victims invariably prize and preserve these genial travesties of themselves. Certain persons (including himself) appear to have had a special attraction for his pencil, appearing over and over again in various phases.

This natural appreciation of type and character is happily displayed in the illustrations reproduced from Mr. Arnold Bennett's books, "Paris Nights" and "From the Log of the 'Velsa'."

Judging from these alone it is a reasonable assumption that Rickards would have attained prominence had he taken to illustration instead of architecture; indeed, that in any other field of artistic expression he would by sheer force of temperament have made his personality manifest.

Spontaneous as these drawings appear, they are the result of intensive introspection. Every line is mentally visualized before being rendered. There is no experimental sketching, nothing tentative. A line when drawn, embracing perhaps the whole side of a figure, was achieved by one facile stroke; if it did not satisfy him, the drawing was discarded in favour of a fresh attempt, but the virile result was never jeopardized by rubbing out or retouching.

Much of the charm of his drawing is lost in reproduction, as is inevitable in ordinary process work, which fails to realize the varying tones of the pencil and the nervous quality of the flexible line that is so personal.

His pen-drawings as such are equally interesting, and, from a process point of view, more readily reproducible without loss of quality. The natural outcome of this medium is line of uniform density, but this is not conspicuous in his work, the line being subordinated to mass and tonal effect.

## THE ART OF E. A. RICKARDS

At one period lithography attracted his attention as a medium peculiarly suited to his temperament, with such excellent results that it is a matter of regret that his experiments in this medium were not more numerous. Although drawn as topical cartoons, the examples illustrated show a nice appreciation of the possibilities of this process.

In etching he should have found, with his natural facility for line, a medium not merely congenial, but one in which the bitten line and available tonal effects were eminently suitable to him. It was only latterly that his interest in this very expressive form of personal production was excited; this interest was, however, regrettably checked by his unfortunate breakdown.

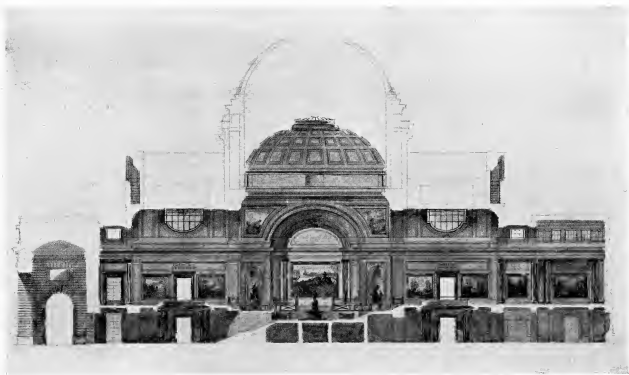
E. A. Rickards' watercolours at times attain a very high level, though in these there is more inequality and less of the suavity that characterizes his work with the point. Although he was always an excellent colourist in the decorative sense, in his early essays from nature colour certainly does not constitute the interest. His later work, however, displays an enormous development in this respect.

An indefatigable sketcher whenever opportunity afforded, his methods have been tentative and evident of emulation and susceptibility to influence. His work can be easily defined in phases: at one time in the mosaic method, his later work being reached through a series of experiments.

In all these manifestations there is conscientious regard for the medium, but independently of his later achievements in colour the drawing and sense of selection are supreme. Though it cannot be claimed that his painting is on the same plane as his draughtsmanship, it is reasonable to assume that, had he been spared, he would have developed further in this direction.

His many-sidedness was remarkable. Notwithstanding the constant and imperative attention to architectural work during a career of success, he found time for various essays and forms of expression, impelled thereto by his characteristic restless energy. His pathetic breakdown, at the zenith of his career, with the tragic sequel, will be deeply regretted. The loss is not only personal; it is a loss to the profession he had so much at heart, the dignity of which he believed in, and did so much to maintain; in which he achieved a reputation that is firmly established by his many and well-known works.

AMOR FENN.



## ARCHITECTURAL DRAWINGS

### *Canadian War Memorial*

The illustrations of architecture are selected from various works, mostly competitive and entirely collaborative, with the exception of the design for the Canadian War Memorial, which has the distinctive interest of being solely the work and conception of E. A. Rickards.

The purpose of the building, which was to house the pictures commissioned by the Canadian Government, imposed restrictions, and to some extent dominated the design, which had to be adapted to the number and sizes of the various paintings, though necessarily this was eventually modified, at least as to the areas to be occupied, so that the pictures could be grouped with some regard to symmetrical and harmonious arrangement.

The external perspective (*see frontispiece*) gives some idea of the general plan, which is cruciform, with a central hall surmounted by a dome. From this hall radiate galleries terminating in chapels, the galleries forming the arms of the cross being connected by other galleries oval on plan.

The interior view is from the central hall on the principal floor; below this on the ground level is a similar arrangement of galleries, lighted externally and by means of wells.

### *War Memorial Fountain and Hall, Nottingham* (Page 19.)

This is a projected scheme, the general lay-out of which bears some resemblance to Rickards' beautiful Memorial to the late King Edward VII at Bristol, though in the present design the Hall forms part of the scheme, whereas at Bristol the Monument and Fountain were arranged to harmonize with an existing building.

It is to be regretted that since the completion of this memorial the balance and scale has been disturbed by a more recent and most unsuitable erection.

### *Usher Hall, Edinburgh* (Page 21.)

This drawing loses much of its charm in reproduction, the original being in watercolour, though it is fairly successful in conveying an impression of masterly suggestiveness.

The effect is greatly enhanced by the happily designed monument in the foreground, which is incidental to the scheme.

### *Museum, Cardiff* (Page 23.)

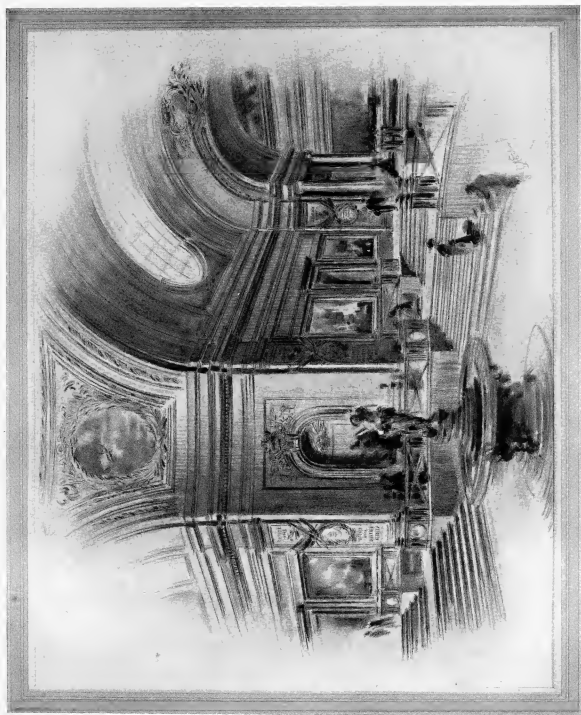
This was designed to range with the existing municipal buildings, probably one of the most interesting and successful works of recent years. It is a matter of regret that this design was not accepted; certainly it is a reasonable presumption that complete unity would have resulted from the same hands that were responsible for the earlier buildings.

### *Central Hall, Westminster* (Pages 25-33.)

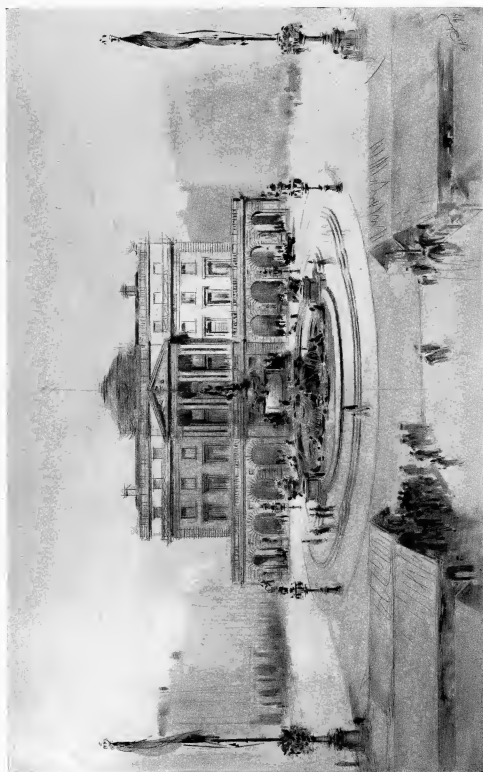
These drawings are typical examples of Rickards' faculty for visualizing, as they were drawn prior to the execution of the work.

The exterior view is from a wash-drawing in monochrome, that of the staircase being in pencil reinforced with monochrome tint. Extraordinary as anticipations of eventual appearances, they are even more so as demonstrations in different mediums. Equally interesting is the pen-drawing which was submitted in the preliminary competition.

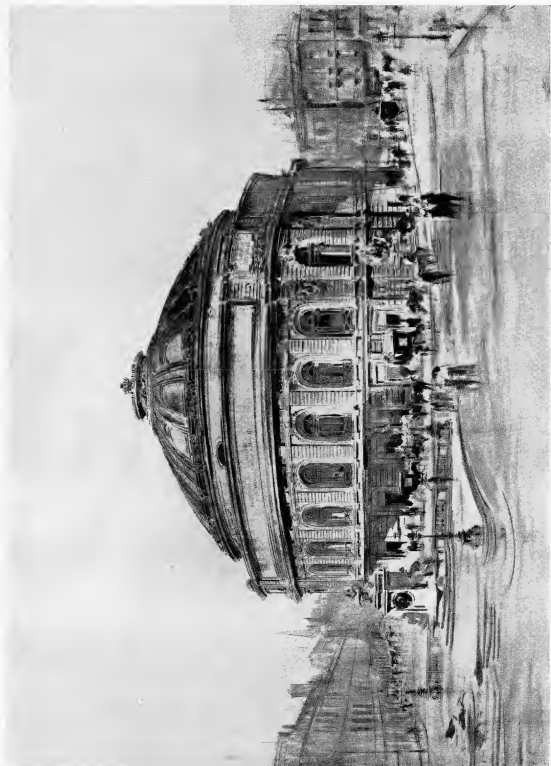




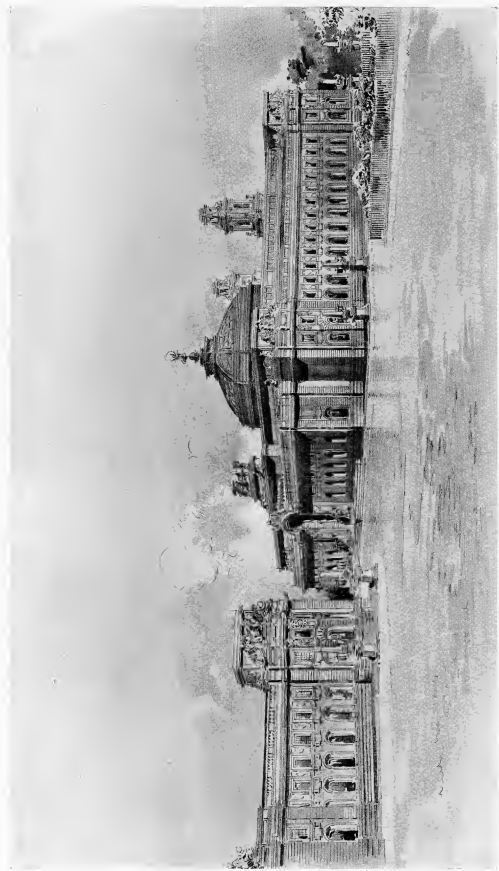
CANADIAN WAR MEMORIAL DESIGN: PERSPECTIVE OF INTERIOR.



WAR MEMORIAL FOUNTAIN AND HALL, NOTTINGHAM



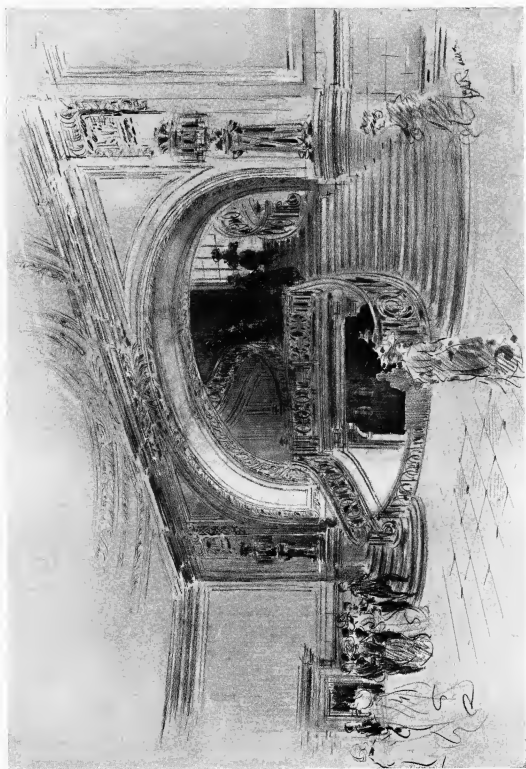
SKETCH DESIGN FOR USHER HALL, EDINBURGH.



· SKETCH DESIGN FOR WELSH NATIONAL MUSEUM, CARDIFF.



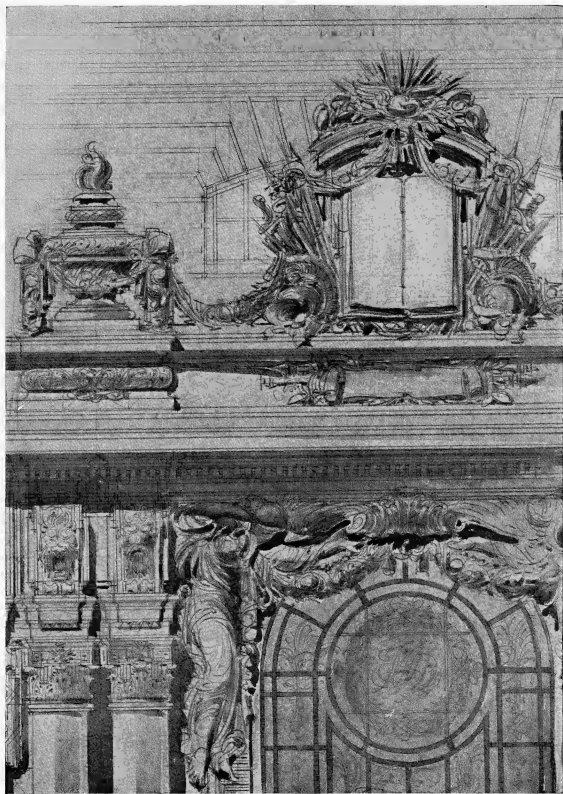
CENTRAL HALL, WESTMINSTER.



CENTRAL HALL, WESTMINSTER: THE GRAND STAIRCASE.

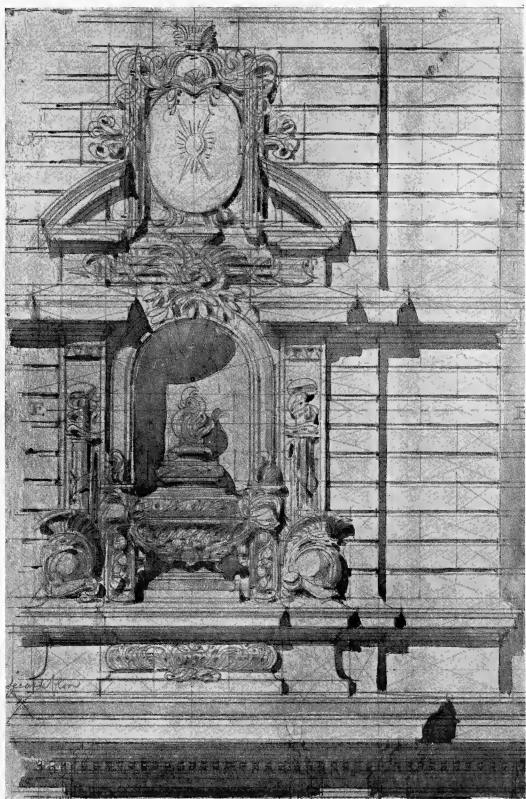


CENTRAL HALL, WESTMINSTER:  
SKETCH SUBMITTED IN PRELIMINARY COMPETITION.



CENTRAL HALL, WESTMINSTER: DETAIL DRAWING.





CENTRAL HALL, WESTMINSTER: DETAIL DRAWING.

*Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay, and Port of London Authority.*  
(Pages 35, 37.)

These reproductions are typical examples of Rickards's detail drawing, and afford a great contrast in the regard to intimate detail to his powerful and impressionistic sketches.

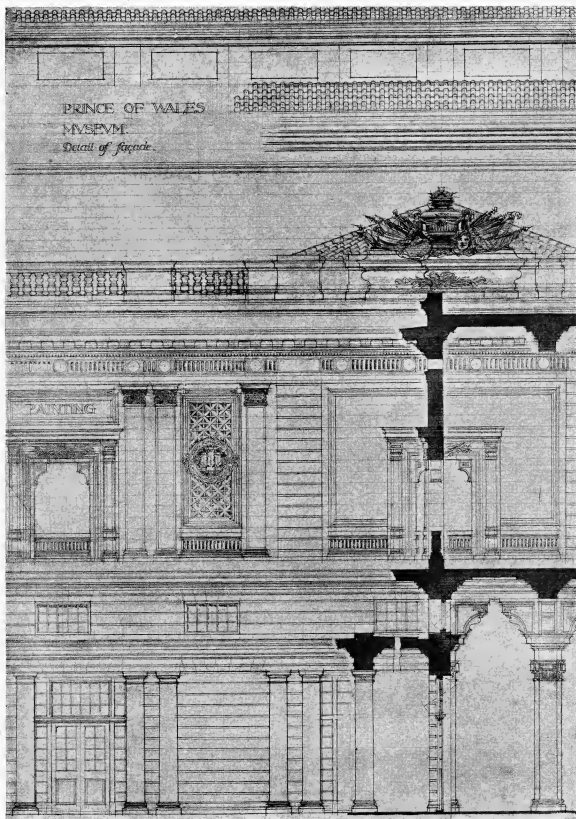
The former design is interesting in the Eastern feeling subtly imposed on the Western manner.

*Studies for Port of London Authority, etc.* (Page 39.)

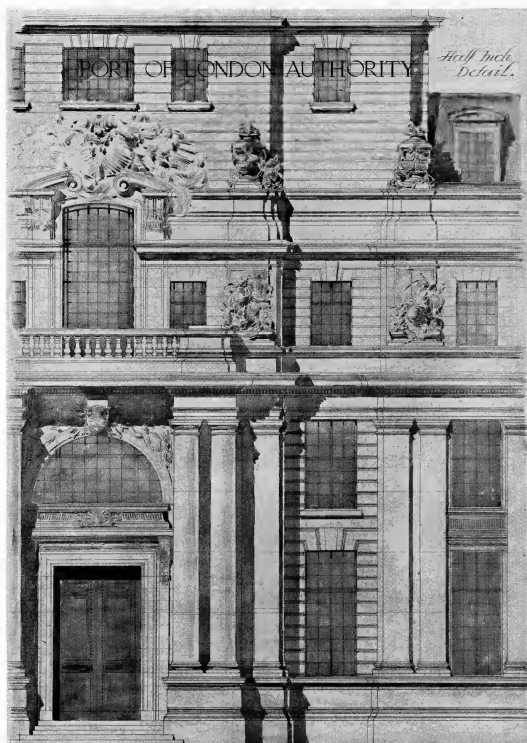
These drawings are reproduced as indicative of Rickards's method in working. The originals are relatively small as to scale, and led eventually to the larger and more complete details.

*Council Chambers: Cardiff Municipal Buildings and Deptford Town Hall.* (Pages 41, 43.)

These are typical pencil-drawings, in each case anticipatory of the eventual effect, and, except in unessential details, depict the work as finally completed.



DETAIL OF PROPOSED MUSEUM, BOMBAY.



DETAIL OF DESIGN FOR PORT OF LONDON AUTHORITY BUILDING.



FIRST STUDY OF TOWER,  
PORT OF LONDON AUTHORITY  
BUILDING.

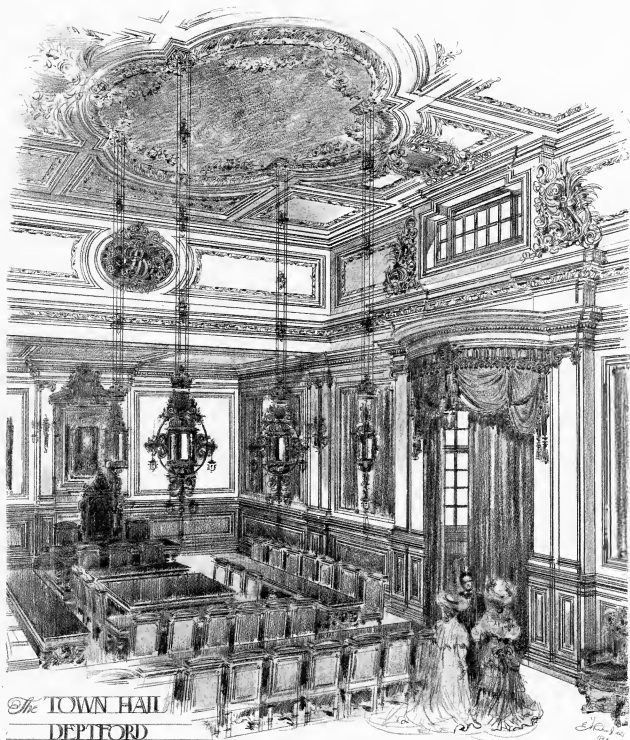


STUDY FOR PORT OF LONDON  
AUTHORITY BUILDING.



DESIGN FOR MEMORIAL TABLET.

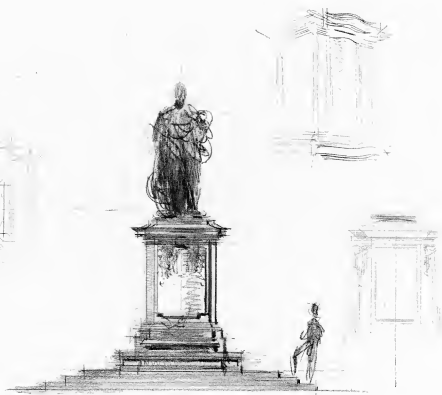




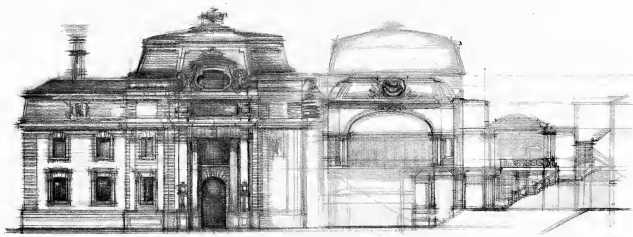
*The* TOWN HALL  
DEPTFORD

*View showing interior of  
Council Chamber*

*James H. J. & Co. Architects. 1904.*



STUDY FOR A MONUMENT.



STUDY FOR GLAMORGAN COUNTY HALL.



*Preliminary Study for Messrs. Colnaghi & Obach's Building,  
New Bond Street. (Page 47.)*

This building constituted an interesting problem, as it was originally designed and partly erected by another architect.

The front, as it now appears with the whole of Messrs. Colnaghi's premises, is the work of E. A. Rickards's firm. The design was to some extent controlled by the previously designed structural work, which was in an advanced state when the commission was put into their hands. The result is certainly distinctive and interesting as an example of shop treatment both exteriorly and interiorly.

The reproduction is from a watercolour drawing, and comparison with the actual work will show that all the essential features were anticipated and preserved.

*Perspective of London County Council Hall. (Page 49.)*

This view from the river conveys a vivid idea of the grandeur of Rickards's conception from both the architectural and picturesque points of view. The preliminary study for this perspective is also intensely interesting as a pen-drawing (page 51).

*Study for Interior Decorations. (Page 53.)*

E. A. Rickards was equally concerned with the interiors of his buildings even to the most minute details, and though little display is here made, the example illustrated may serve. It may also be observed that he had a fine sense of colour and of desirable association of the various features incidental to interior work.

The design for a sideboard reproduced, which was executed in quartered walnut, is a typical example of his many essays in furniture (page 55).



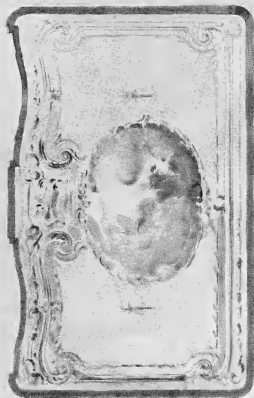
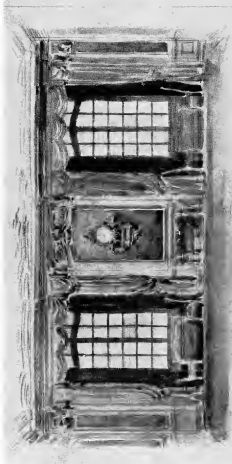
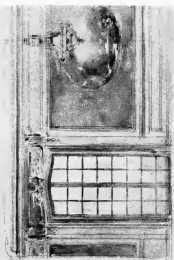
PRELIMINARY STUDY FOR MESSRS. COLNAGHI & OBACH'S BUILDING,  
NEW BOND STREET, LONDON.



PERSPECTIVE OF L.C.C. HALL. COMPETITION DESIGN.



PRELIMINARY STUDY FOR LONDON COUNTY HALL.



STUDIES FOR INTERIOR DECORATION.



DESIGN FOR SIDEBOARD.

## DESIGNS FOR PUBLIC MONUMENTS.

As a nation we have little cause to be proud of our public monuments, in which too often indifference to or impatience of architectural proportion and detail are apparent. One notable exception in modern times is the Wellington Memorial in St. Paul's Cathedral by Alfred Stevens, who, however, was equally facile in the arts of sculpture and design.

This, though a desirable combination, is rare in the individual. It is sometimes customary where important works are concerned to associate in collaboration the sculptor and architect with varying success.

Undoubtedly greater unity would be achieved by the domination of the designer, and that this is possible is demonstrated by Rickards's memorial to King Edward VII at Bristol—an excellent example of virility in design and grandeur of conception.

The same feeling is evident in the design reproduced for the "Monument of the Reformation at Geneva," while his "Sketch for a Street Terminal" is suggestive of what might be done in our cities. Less important in structure, but equally interesting as a design, is the "Astley Memorial Fountain" erected at Newmarket.

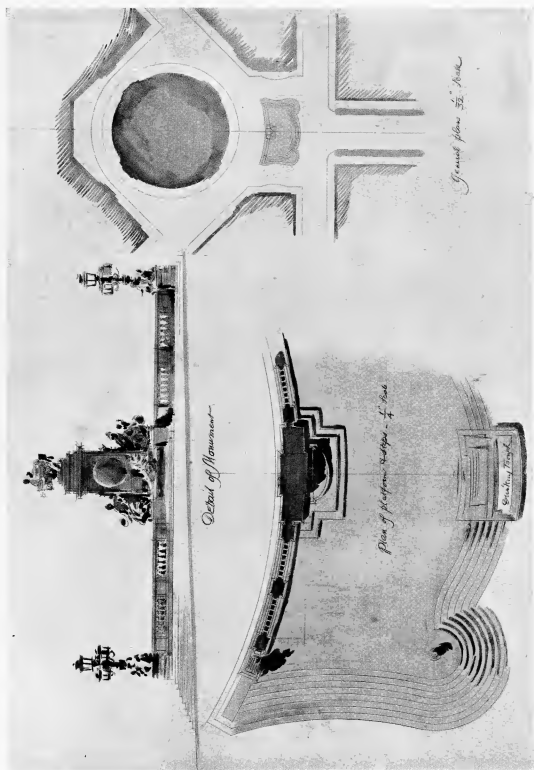
E. A. Rickards on several occasions collaborated with success, notably in the design reproduced, with Henry Poole, which was awarded the first Premium in the Civic Arts Competition; a similar work at the same hands, a "Memorial to Captain Ball," the well-known aviator, has recently been unveiled at Nottingham.

Rickards's ability to deal successfully with such public works is clearly demonstrated by his wonderful study for a "Memorial to King Edward VII," proposed to be erected in Parliament Square. It would be difficult to find a parallel except in the work of Alfred Stevens. Prior to this Rickards had been interested in the design of public monuments, for which he had prepared many sketches, some of which are reproduced.

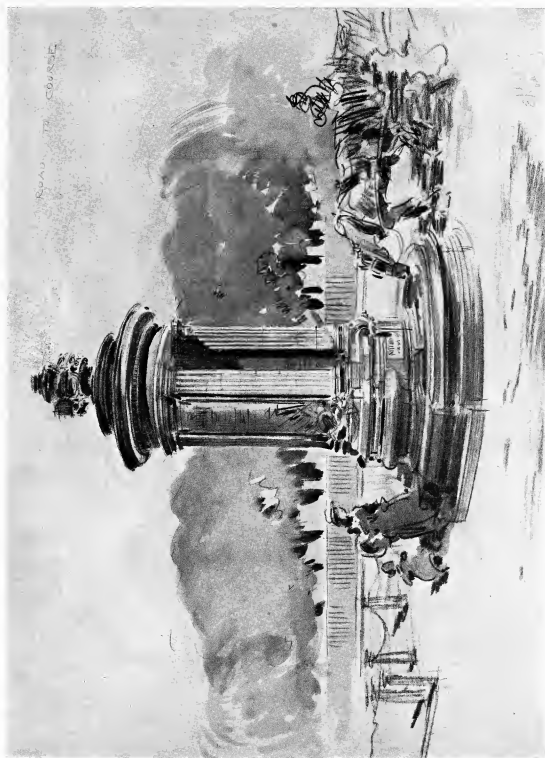
MONUMENT DE LA  
RÉFORMATION A  
GENÈVE







SKETCH FOR A STREET TERMINAL.



ASTLEY MEMORIAL FOUNTAIN, NEWMARKET.



FIRST PREMIATED DESIGN FOR A PEDESTAL MEMORIAL  
(CIVIC ARTS ASSOCIATION).



STUDY FOR MEMORIAL TO KING EDWARD VII, PARLIAMENT SQUARE.



DESIGN FOR A PUBLIC MONUMENT.



SKETCH DESIGN FOR EQUESTRIAN STATUE.



PEN-STUDY FOR EQUESTRIAN STATUE.

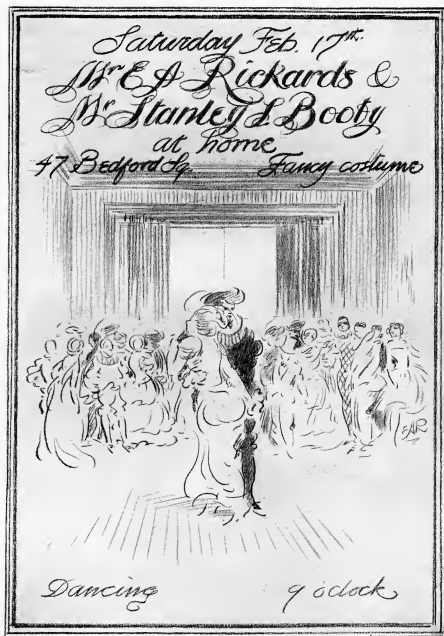
## DESIGNS FOR PROGRAMMES, ETC.

The feeling for unity and fitness characteristic of Rickards's architectural work is apparent in these designs, which in every case display individuality. The treatment is admirable, showing appreciation of the qualities of pen-drawing for reproduction. The pen-drawing illustrated in commemoration of the Armistice, 11 November 1918, is remarkable, as, owing to the emergency, it was executed in about two hours.

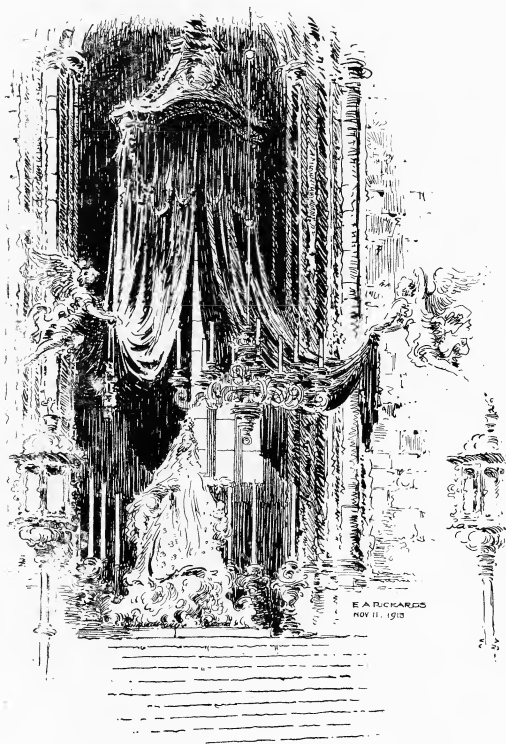




PROGRAMME DESIGNS



INVITATION CARD DESIGN.

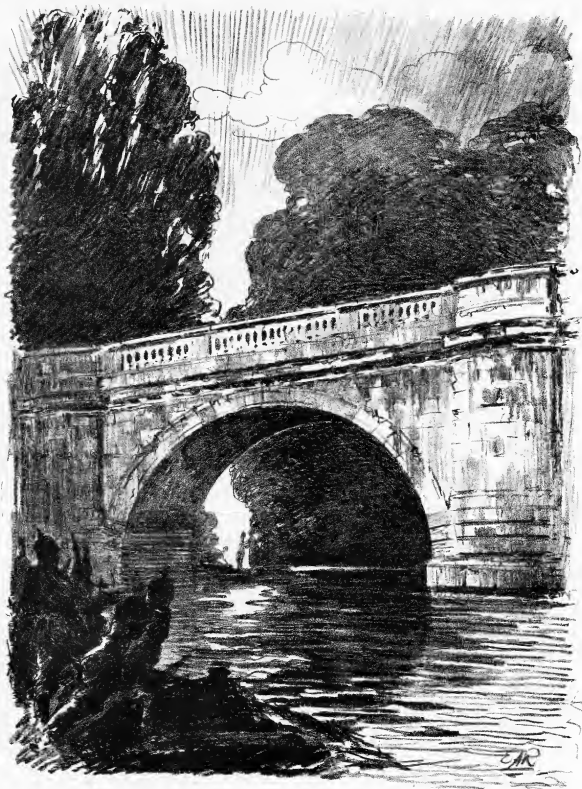


PEN-DRAWING COMMEMORATING THE ARMISTICE, Nov. 11, 1918.

## LITHOGRAPHS.

The reproductions are selected from a series of War Cartoons. Topically interesting, they are even more so as essays in a medium that was evidently congenial. Notwithstanding that these were his first experience of this highly expressive form of personal production, they demonstrate conclusively his appreciation of the possibilities of the Lithographic Art.

Clever in the humorous and typical expression, they will probably be appreciated more for the beautiful rendering of the settings.



LITHOGRAPH.



LITHOGRAPH.



GENTLY SARDONIC.

"From the Log of the 'Velsa.'"



AN OFFICER

OF THE FRENCH REPUBLIC.

## BOOK ILLUSTRATIONS.

His temperamental humour and observance of type and character were allied to restless activity, which led naturally to episodic expression. Even when apparently seriously absorbed in his architectural work, there were occasions when this would break out as though irrepressible, either in a sketch of character or in spontaneous suggestion of some incident suddenly brought to mind. It is subject to curious reflection that, with so natural a facility in this direction, Rickards ever took to architecture, though had this been otherwise the profession would have lacked one of its most distinguished exponents. Notwithstanding, there is little doubt that he had always been enthusiastically devoted to his first choice, regarding his illustrative tendency as a relaxation from his more serious work.

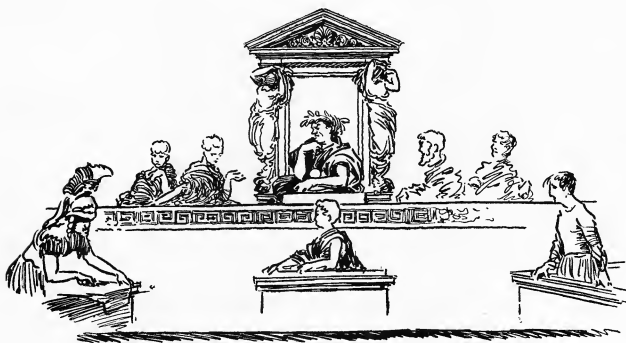
Unbiased by school or tradition, his draughtsmanship is a purely natural and personal expression. His command of line was the result of comprehension of form, though it may be conceded that the conciseness and clarity of expression essential to architectural work had some influence in forming his style.

The reproductions are selected from illustrations of the A.A. play that appeared first in the "Tufton Street Tatler," also from Mr. Arnold Bennett's books, "Paris Nights" and "From the Log of the 'Velsa.'" The originals of the two latter are mostly in pencil. Much of the quality is inevitably lost in reproduction, but there is still sufficient indication of Rickards's masterly control of this implement.



SKETCHES FROM THE BOOK OF THE A.A. PLAY, 1909.





SKETCHES FROM THE BOOK OF THE A.A. PLAY, 1909.



GAMBLING AT MONTE CARLO.



OPPOSITE THE MOULIN ROUGE.

From "Paris Nights."

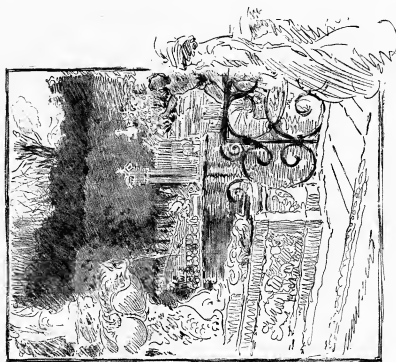


A BY-PRODUCT OF RUSSIAN  
POLITICS.



THE UNFORGETTABLE SEASON

From "Paris Nights."

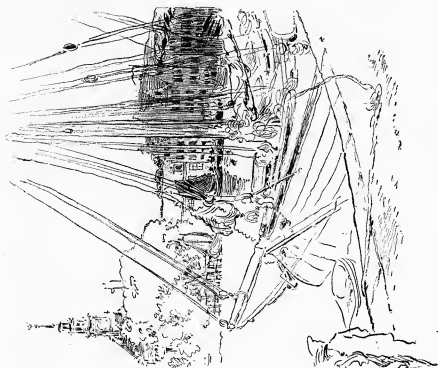


LESS UNHAPPY HERE THAN AT HOME.



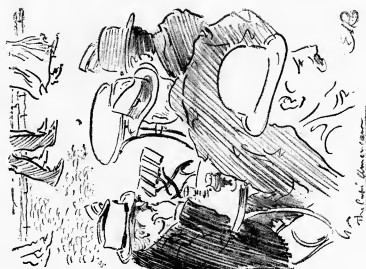
THE RESTAURANT.

From "Paris Nights."



THE "VELSA" AT HOORN.

"From the Log of the 'Velsa.'"



THE CAFÉ AMERICAN AT  
AMSTERDAM.



SCENE IN GHENT.



A MINOR BARGE WHICH A GIRL CAN STEER.

"From the Log of the 'Velsa.'"



THE EMBARKATION.



ON THE DUNES NEAR BOULOGNE.

"From the Log of the 'Velsa.'"

## CARICATURES.

If it were not that E. A. Rickards's humour in this direction was always good-natured, it would have caused anxiety to those with whom he was brought in contact. Inevitably his caricatures are quite spontaneous productions, on any scrap of paper, and in any medium available.

Those immediately reproduced were drawn on menu cards at a farewell dinner to the particular victim, and are selected from a number which, needless to state, were collected and preserved by the subject of this spontaneous humour.

Rickards's sketch-books teem with these humorous sallies, and with so much that is excellent selection has been difficult, but the few reproduced will serve to illustrate this phase of his work.





Amusing to happen



Roll on!

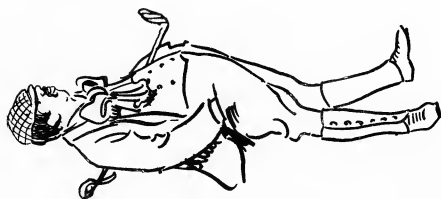


Miss Sydney Haines





CARICATURE A. B.



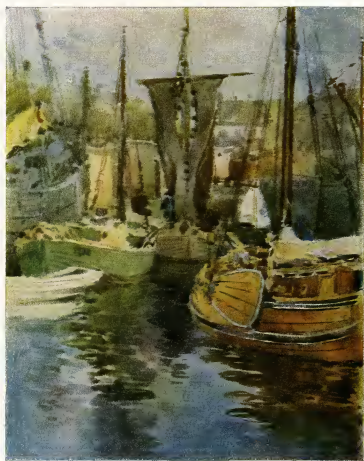
## WATERCOLOURS AND SKETCHES.

E. A. Rickards's sketches are intensely graphic and full of atmospheric suggestion. Whatever the medium, his sense of selection and wonderful faculty of draughtsmanship are always in evidence. Though his favourite and probably most successful medium of expression was that of the point, he had always been intensely interested in sketching in watercolours, with at times extremely happy results.

A review of this work clearly indicates that he was prone to experiment and susceptible to the influence of contemporaneous work. The earlier works are tentative in treatment and quite lacking the generous indulgence in colour that characterizes the later phase, and are not remarkable except for excellent drawing and an evident eye for composition. This was followed by a phase of direct approximation of form and colour, with the view to preserving the purity of the latter. A vastly different method is apparent in the last development, in which the detail is achieved by impainting and taking out while in a wet state.

Of the reproductions, the two selected from the illustrations of the "Log of the 'Velsa'" are typical examples of the intermediate manner, to which phase also belongs the harbour scene. The other reproductions are representative of his later manner, being indeed of recent execution.

The Vienna sketches will doubtless be found equally interesting, not merely for their artistic effect, but as examples of Rickards's command of differing mediums.



AN ARISTOCRAT AMONG THE LABOURING  
CLASSES.

"From the Log of the 'Velsa.'"



IN THE ESTUARY.

"From the Log of the 'Velsa.'"



HARBOUR SCENE.













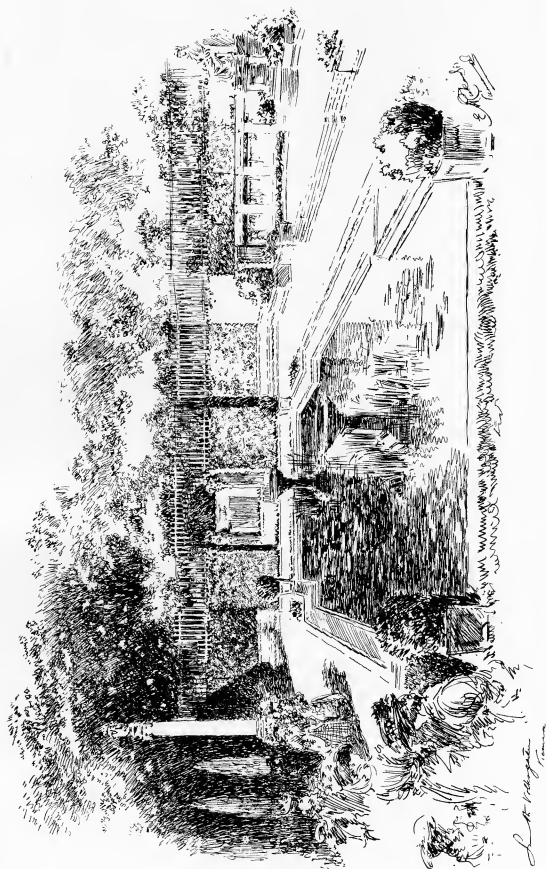




STREET IN VIENNA.



FOUNTAINS, VIENNA



ELIZABETH GARDEN, VIENNA.